

REMARKS

The Applicants have reviewed the Office Action dated June 1, 2006 and have made amendments to the claims. Claims 7 and 8 have been cancelled, without prejudice. New claims 23 and 24 have been added. Claims 1-6, 9-24 are pending. Reconsideration and allowance of the pending claims in view of the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Drawings

The Examiner objected to the figures by asserting that they failed to show necessary textual labels. The Examiner identified the terms "WSPQ" and "I/F" on FIG. 2. The Applicants are submitting amended drawings as an attachment to this response that include descriptive textual labels for these terms on FIG. 2. Support for these amendments is found in the specification at, for example, page 5, lines 4-5, page 6, lines 18-29 and page 6, line 24. The Applicants have also amended FIG. 2 to correct a mis-labeling of the element named "Network Interface." This element was initially incorrectly labeled as "232" and has been amended to be labeled "230." Support for this amendment is found in the specification at, for example, page 6, lines 18-19. The Applicants have also amended FIG. 2 to identify the element labeled 234 as a "Removable Storage Adapter." Support for this amendment is found in the specification at, for example, page 6, line 26.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 101

The Examiner rejected claims 11-22 under 35 U.S.C. § 101 as being directed to non-statutory subject matter. The Applicants have amended claim 17 to be directed to "a computer readable medium tangibly encoded with computer instructions." The Applicants respectfully assert that amended claim 17 is now directed to a computer readable medium tangibly encoded with computer instructions and falls within the statutory defined patentable subject matter. See, MPEP §2106.

With respect to claims 11-16, the Applicants point out that these claims are directed to "a system of searching for data." See, claim 11 preamble. In order to further clarify that the claimed subject matter of claims 11-16 are directed to statutory subject matter, the Applicants have amended claim 11 to more clearly recite that the claimed "parser," "dispatcher," and "normalizer" "operate on at least one computer system." Support for this amendment is found in the specification at, for example, FIG. 2; page 6, line 12 through page 10, line 6, particularly at page 7, line 19 through page 9, line 8. The Applicants assert that amended claim 11 is directed to a machine or manufacture with an identified physical structure and is therefore a statutory product claim under the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §101.

The Applicants have further amend claim 11 to include "a result generator for sending at least part of the plurality of results to the client." The inclusion of the specified "result generator" results in the claimed subject matter of claim 11 clearly providing a "useful, concrete, and tangible result" and therefore falls within patentable subject matter as defined by 35 U.S.C. §101. MPEP 2106, citing *State Street Bank* 149 F.3d at 1373.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)

The Examiner rejected claims 1-4, 6-7, 11-12, 14, 17,-18, and 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by *Chidlovskii* (U.S. Patent No. 6,829,599) (hereinafter "*Chidlovskii*"). The Examiner cites 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) and a proper rejection requires that a single reference teach (i.e., identically describe) each and every element of the rejected claims as being anticipated by *Chidlovskii*.¹

¹ See MPEP §2131 (Emphasis Added) "A claim is anticipated only if each and every element as set forth in the claim is found, either expressly or inherently described, in a single prior art reference." *Verdegaal Bros. v. Union Oil Co. of California*, 814 F.2d 628, 631, 2 USPQ2d 1051, 1053 (Fed. Cir. 1987). "The identical invention must be shown in

To begin, the Applicants have cancelled claims 7 and 8, without prejudice, thereby rendering the rejection of claim 7 under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) moot.

With regards to amended independent claims 1, 11 and 17, the Applicants have amended these claims to more particularly set forth the presently claimed invention. Support for these amendments is found in the specification at, for example, page 8, lines 17-20; page 12, lines 5-12; page 13, lines 9-22; page 23. No new matter has been added by these amendments.

To begin, the Chidlovskii reference, teaches forming queries to be provided to information sources and filtering the results produced by the information sources in response to those queries. Chidlovskii, Abstract. The system of Chidlovskii translates the user provided query "into a target query language appropriate for each information source." Chidlovskii, column 5, lines 14-23. Chidlovskii includes a "meta-search engine 104" which compiles queries to send to "information sources." Chidlovskii, FIG. 1A, column 3, lines 11-23. These information sources correspond to the "plurality of search services" specified for the present invention.

In contrast to Chidlovskii, the presently claimed invention specifies "sending the question through a defined Application Program Interface to a plurality of search services, wherein each search service within the plurality of search services accepts the question through the defined Application Program Interface that is defined to be the same Application Program Interface for all of the search services within the plurality of search services." This aspect of the presently claimed invention obviates the requirement to "translate" queries as is performed by Chidlovskii, and distinguishes the presently claimed invention over Chidlovskii.

as complete detail as is contained in the ... claim."

Presently Amended claims 1, 11 and 17 further specify "each of the one or more of the search services provides results through the defined Application Program Interface." As discussed above, Chidlvoskii does not teach using a "defined Application Program Interface" for the "sending the question" and therefore cannot teach or suggest "provid[ing] results through the defined Application Program Interface" as is set forth for amended independent claim 1.

Claims 1, 11 and 17 have been further amended to specify "receiving, from each of the one or more of the search services, a specification of an associated rank value for each result within the plurality of results." The Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's characterization of the Chidlvoskii reference as teaching "each of the results has an associated rank that is assigned by the search service from which the result is received." Office Action dated June 1, 2006, page 5, fifth paragraph, citing Chidlvoskii, column 3, lines 57-60, column 5, lines 34-40, Fig. 1B-2). The Chidlvoskii reference teaches receiving results from multiple information sources, compiling those results into a composite result list and then ranking that composite result list. The Applicants assert that the Chidlvoskii reference does not teach or suggest a ranking by its "information sources," which correspond to the "search service from which the result is received" specified for the presently claimed invention. The ranking described by Chidlvoskii is performed by the meta-search engine 104 that receives the results, not by the search service from which the result is received."

With regards to claim 2, the Applicants have amended this claim to specify "sending, through the defined Application Programming Interface and in conjunction with the question, at least one user preference to the plurality of search services." Support for these amendments is found in the specification at, for example, page 12, lines 1-28. No new matter has been added by these amendments. The Examiner cites a portion of Chidlvoskii that teaches allowing a user to provide feedback regarding search results. Office Action dated June 1, 2006, page 5, last paragraph (citing Chidlvoskii, column 5,

lines 49-55). This "feedback" is used to change ranking parameters for the received results. The Applicants assert that Chidlovskii does not teach or suggest "sending ... at least one user preference to the plurality of search services" as is set forth for dependent claim 2. This "feedback" is never sent anywhere in the system of Chidlovskii. The Applicants also traverse the assertion that the "feedback" is an adequate teaching of a "user preference." "Feedback" is defined as "a process in which the factors that produce a result are themselves modified, corrected, strengthened, etc. by that result." Webster's New World College Dictionary, fourth edition, page 520. A preference, on the other hand, is "something preferred; one's first choice." *Id.*, at page 1133. The Applicants assert that "feedback," which results from a particular stimulus such as the quality or other factor of the results produced by the "information sources" of Chidlovskii, is not a "preference" given the common meanings of these words. The Applicants' specification further uses the term "user preference" consistently with the above dictionary definition. See, for example, page 9, lines 22-28.

The Applicants have amended claim 3 to provide proper antecedent basis in light of the amendments to claim 1, described above.

The Applicants have amended claims 4, 12 and 18 to specify that "the subset being selected in dependence upon the associated specification of the rank values of the results after the adjusting step and upon a user specified preference for a number of results to receive." Support for these amendments is found in the specification at, for example, page 15, lines 23-28. No new matter has been added by these amendments. The Applicants assert that the cited references do not teach or suggest returning a subset of results "in dependence ... upon a user specified preference for a number of results to receive."

The Applicants have amended claims 6, 14 and 20 to more clearly specify "maintaining a set of user defined preferences, wherein the user defined preferences comprise the

client specification, and wherein the client specification comprises a user specified weight for at least one search service within the one or more search services." Support for these amendments is found in the specification at, for example, page 9, lines 21-28. No new matter has been added. The Applicants assert that the Chidlovskii reference does not teach or suggest "maintaining a set of user defined preferences" as is set forth by these claims.

Furthermore, dependent claims 2-6, 9-10, 23 and 24; 12-16 and 18-22 depend from claims 1, 11 and 17, respectively, and therefore include all of the limitations of those independent claims. As discussed above, independent claims 1, 11 and 17 distinguish over the Chidlovskii reference. The Applicants therefore further assert that dependent claims 2-6, 9-10, 23 and 24; 12-16 and 18-22 also distinguish over the Chidlovskii reference as well. Therefore, the Applicants respectfully assert that the Examiner's rejection of claims 2-6, 9-10, 23 and 24; 12-16 and 18-22 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Chidlovskii should be withdrawn.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 103 – Chidlovskii and Singhal

The Examiner rejected claims 5, 13, and 18 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Chidlovskii* (U.S. Patent No. 6,829,599) (hereinafter "Chidlovskii") in view of Patent No. 6,370,527 to Singhal (hereinafter "Singhal").

The Applicants have amended claims 5, 13, and 18 to specify "sending, through the defined Application Program Interface and in conjunction with the question, a response timeout value; and retrieving, after a time period corresponding to the response timeout value elapses, the results from the result pool." Support for these amendments is found in the specification at, for example, page 12, lines 19-26. No new matter has been added by these amendments. The Applicants assert that the cited references do not teach or suggest the limitations of these amended claims.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 103 – Chidlovskii and McConnell

The Examiner rejected claims 5, 13, and 18 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Chidlovskii* (U.S. Patent No. 6,829,599) (hereinafter “Chidlovskii”) in view of Patent No. 6,999,963 to McConnell (hereinafter “McConnell”).

The Applicants have cancelled, without prejudice, claim 8, thereby rendering the rejection of that claim moot. The Applicants have amended claim 15 to include limitations corresponding to those of amended claim 9.

With regards to amended claims 9, 15 and 21, the Applicants have amended these claims to recite “wherein the question is a natural language question, the method further comprising the step of sending, through the defined Application Program Interface, a parsed representation of the natural language question to the search services, wherein the parsed representation consists of terms within the natural language query along with metadata for the terms within the natural language query.” Support for these amendments is found in the specification at, for example, page 12, lines 13-18. No new matter has been added by these amendments. The Applicants have further amended claim 21 to include a limitation corresponding to previously pending, now cancelled, claim 8.

The Applicants point out that the McConnell reference teaches generating “formal command queries (e.g., an SQL query)” from a natural language query. McConnell, Abstract. These “formal command queries” are generated by processing that includes parsing the natural language string, determining matches with indexed annotations to generate rank ordered fragments. McConnell, column 41, lines 38-46. These ‘rank ordered fragments are then “chained” so that a formal command query may be generated for interpretation by the database management process 470.” McConnell, column 41, lines 62-66. The Applicants assert that McConnell does not send the

parsed representations anywhere, but uses the parsed representations for further processing to develop the query that is, in turn, actually sent.

With regards to claims 10, 16 and 22, the Applicants have amended these claims to specify “wherein the grammatical information comprises at least one of identification of nouns in the natural language question, identification of verbs in the natural language question and identification of at least one of adjectives and adverbs in the natural language question.” Support for these amendments is found in the specification at, for example, page 12, lines 13-18 and page 16, line 21 through page 17, line 9. No new matter has been added by these amendments. The Applicants assert that the cited references do not teach or suggest “generating” the specified information in conjunction with “providing the grammatical information to at least one of the search services” as is set forth for these claims.

New Claims

The Applicants have added new claims 23 and 24. Support for these claims is found in the specification at, for example, page 8, lines 8-17; page 16, line 21 through page 17, line 9; and page 19, lines 10-25. No new matter has been added by these amendments. The Applicants assert that the subject matter of these new claims is not taught or suggested by the cited references.

CONCLUSION

Applicants respectfully submit that all of the grounds for rejection stated in the Examiner’s Office Action have been overcome, and that all claims in the application are allowable. It is believed that the application is now in condition for allowance, which allowance is respectfully requested.

No amendment made was related to the statutory requirements of patentability unless expressly stated herein. No amendment made was for the purpose of narrowing the

scope of any claim, unless Applicants have argued herein that such amendment was made to distinguish over a particular reference or combination of references.

PLEASE CALL the undersigned attorney at (561) 989-9811 should the Examiner believe a telephone interview would advance prosecution of the application.

Respectfully submitted,

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ATTACHMENT – REPLACEMENT FIGURES